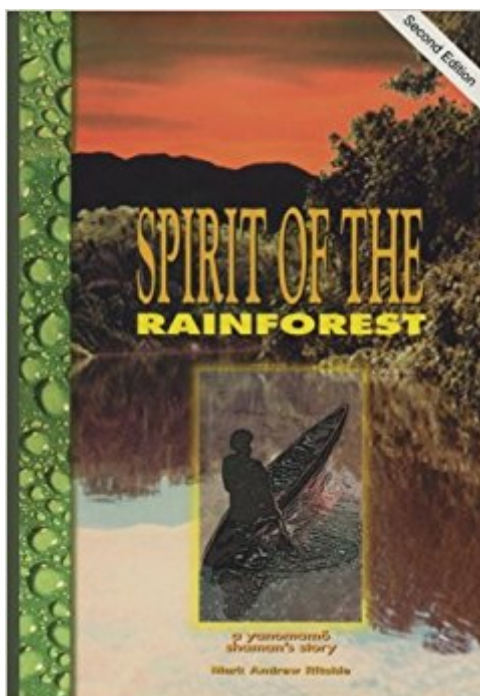


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# Spirit Of The Rainforest: A Yanomamo Shaman's Story



## Synopsis

The Yanomamo of the - endangered children of nature or indigenous warmongers on the verge of destroying themselves? Now for the first time, a powerful Yanomamo shaman speaks for his people. Brutally riveting, the story of *Jungleman* is an extraordinary and powerful document.

## Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Island Lake Press; Second Edition edition (January 1, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 9780964695238

ISBN-13: 978-0964695238

ASIN: 0964695235

Product Dimensions: 6.7 x 0.7 x 9.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 84 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #31,763 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 in [Books > History > World > Religious > Ethnic & Tribal](#) #8 in [Books > History > World > Religious > New Age, Mythology & Occult](#) #11 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Religions, Practices & Sacred Texts > Tribal & Ethnic > Native American](#)

## Customer Reviews

This is the true story told from the first person viewpoint by a Yanomamo shaman in Venezuela. Many of the descriptions of violence in this book are very graphic, so it should not be read by children. Nevertheless, this book is valuable in the sense that it describes in vivid detail how the evil spirit world operates, and how anthropologists and good and bad missionaries have affected the Yanomamo people's world. In the end, some of the Yanomamo people, including the story teller (as told to a non-Yanomamo man), cast away their evil spirits and accept the one true God which brings them true peace. This book has a number of 'threads' (messages) running through it. It is difficult to put down.

When I was elementary school, the curriculum emphasized repetition. If one paid attention and got it the first time, then boredom was the big challenge. At first, I spent the extra time acting out in class, but I later learned to keep a pile of library books in my desk and simply read during repetitious lessons. To keep the pilot light running in seminary, I read books from the recommended reading

lists or recommended by trusted friends in Christ. Mark Richie's *Spirit of the Rainforest* was one such book. Understanding why this book is interesting requires a bit of background. In the early modern era, humanists questioned the divinity of Christ and especially the doctrine of the atonement. The atonement suggested that Christ died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3-6) and it implied that humans were inherently sinful (Genesis 3:6). By contrast, the humanists believed that humanity was basically good (and was not in need of Christ's atonement or absolute moral standards) and they sought to build a utopia without God. In this context, the idea of a noble savage arose—primitive human beings untainted by civilization who were inherently good, not evil [2]. Enter Jungleman, a Shaman [3] living among the Yanomamö people of the rainforests of Columbia who was untouched by the corrupted influence of civilization. *Spirit of the Rainforest* is the narrative of his life told from his perspective (8). Richie writes in his introduction: The Yanomamö are one of the world's most mysterious peoples. Small, rarely over five feet tall, they have the speed, strength, and agility of a jungle cat. Their woman can tote their own weight up and down a jungle trail that would challenge me even if I were empty handed. Their men can call, track, and shoot anything that breathes in a jungle that is hostile enough to kill anyone but a trained survivalist (7). As a young warrior, Jungleman invited demons from the spirit world into his heart and mind. These demons offer him knowledge of far off events and strength in defeating his enemies. Jungleman knows these demons by animal names, such as Jaguar Spirit, Monkey Spirit, and so on. For example, Ritchie writes about Jaguar Spirit, the dominant, warrior or hunting spirit: "Don't go in here. [Referring to a Christian village] Jaguar Spirit told me. "There's too much danger here. We are afraid." It was the first time I had ever heard fear coming from Jaguar Spirit, and it made me feel poor inside. My hands began to flutter and I held my bow tight to make them stop. (97) But these spirits cannot be trusted and will abandon and turn on a Shaman when he shows weakness (like not following their advice to kill someone—especially children in a competing village) or for growing old. Much of the violence among Yanomamö people historically arose in fights over women. The Yanomamö traditionally practiced polygamy and raided other villages to procure young women. Such raids were not easily forgotten because people would be killed and families broken up. Consequently, longstanding blood vendettas existed among neighboring villages. Jungleman eventually comes to know Christ. His spirits abandoned him. In turn, he abandoned his warrior ways and becomes an advocate for the right of Yanomamö women to marry men of their own choosing. Those who want to believe the noble savage myth (or to disbelieve

the existence of the spiritual world) will be disappointed with Ritchie's Spirit of the Rainforest. Critics question Ritchie's claim that he simply wrote down what he was told (8). I was not disappointed and found his accounts credible, in part, because his accounts of Yanoman life are consistent with accounts of other native cultures. For example, the purpose of head-hunting in pre-modern Taiwan was: To gain a head, as noted earlier, was to qualify a young man to gain the young woman he wished to marry. Revenge for the death of a loved one was also the occasion to take an enemy head [4]. There is also striking consistency in the influence of a Monkey Spirit (a spirit of lust acted out indiscriminately) in jungle culture and our own. Ritchie's Spirit of the Rainforest is a page turner and a great book to take along to the beach. Reality is so much more interesting than fantasy. As a narrative, this book lends itself to becoming a good screen play [5]. [1] spirit-of-the-rainforest website. [2] The film, The Wild Child (1970) by Francois Truffaut chronicles the story of an abandoned child in 1798 who lived in the woods alone. When he was discovered, he could not speak and was suspicious of other people. A French scientist takes him in attempting to educate him and to learn from him as a potential validation of the noble savage hypothesis (wikipedia cite: The\_Wild\_Child). [3] A shaman is a term that replaced the politically incorrect term, witch doctor. [4] Ralph Covell. 1998. Pentecost of the Hills in Taiwan. Pasadena: Hope Publishing House. Page 26. [5] Another film about tribal life is: End of a Spear (2006). This film re-enacts the story of Mincayani, Waodani warrior, who leads the raid that kills Steve Saint's father and four other missionaries in 1956.

While I have not been to the , I have been around the world often and involved in limited capacities with primitive cultures. I have to admit I have often romanticized the concept of native peoples living in a primitive environment, free of all the cares and worries of modern life. This book brings that fairy tale into stark contrast with the reality of fighting every day for survival against nature, disease, the jungle, and tribal enemies. Unfortunately, many across the civilized world appears to have succumbed to this romanticized view. Further, the very idea that people such as this would choose a 'Euro-Christian' model when given the opportunity appears repulsive to many, despite the fact that it has proven immensely beneficial to the lifestyle and longevity of countless millions. The truth is they suffer horribly in so many ways. Many westerners argue they should be left to live the way they want. It would seem to me that they had little choice in the matter and were born into their circumstances. I doubt that the women of their society voted for the arranged marriages, child brides, gang rapes, and servitude. It would be akin to saying Jews going to the gas chambers was ok because they chose to live in Europe. The one thing this book has brought home to me is that

indigenous people are not animals to be studied while we stand idly by as they starve, die of disease and sickness, or succumb to the wild. Burying a child is no less traumatic for a Yanomamo father, than it would be for me. They are human beings that deserve to be treated as such and at least given the opportunity to choose how they will live. Keeping modern opportunities hidden from them and forcing them to choose from a position of ignorance because of some western idealized notion of Eden is unconscionable. I would strongly recommend this book not only for Christians, but anyone truly interested in seeing the world through the eyes of primitive people. I do echo the caution that due to sexual content, it is not suitable for children.

After reading, I guess is the best non fiction book I have ever read. It exposes uncovered truths about Shagnon and pederast Lizot. I am so satisfied, that I feel like it is the ultimate book, like that nothing else will be better. Like I do not have to read any more. But, this reprint is very low quality, like from pirates books in the streets of Bogotá-Colombia. Maybe an ebook would be a better option to offer us. I was tempted to return it, but refund policy could not pay for the international shipping, so I decided to read it.

A Shaman from a tribe of the jungle tells his story. He makes it clear there are no pristine tribes anywhere in isolation in any part of the world. He tells of the spiritual darkness that kept his people in constant turmoil until they were given an opportunity to be free. Very enlightening.

This book reveals the hypocrisy of both missionaries and anthropologists from an native's perspective. It also reveals the results of the opposing worldviews i.e. Christianity vs. Darwinism, and their effects on the lives of the natives. Spirit of the Rainforest is truly an amazing read and the horrifying reality in which people who are under the power of darkness live will linger with the reader.

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